

The Association of State Rail Safety Managers

Ms. Jo Strang
Associate Administrator for Safety
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Mail Stop W35 – 328
Washington, D.C. 20590

February 28, 2008

Dear Ms. Strang:

The Executive Committee of the Association of State Rail Safety Managers (Association) respectfully requests that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) adopt a uniform training funding policy for all States in the State Rail Safety Participation Program. The policy requested pertains to region-funded training and does not address training offered by the Safety Improvement & Development Team.

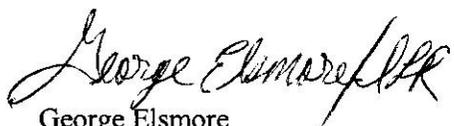
Lack of uniformity in regional training creates an inequitable situation for excluded States. Our understanding of FRA policy is that regions will fund state travel to discipline training workshops but not necessarily travel to regional conferences. The Association supports that policy, because it understands regional budgets are finite and that discipline workshops afford better training opportunities than regional conferences. Nonetheless, in the past some regions have not funded state travel to regional discipline workshops.

FRA's commitment to including States in regional training remains tentative so long as the commitment is accompanied by the qualification that funding is subject to "availability of budgeted funds." While predicting future budgets is difficult, providing regions with the latitude to opt out of a commitment to fund State travel to discipline workshops creates an opportunity for inequitable treatment. We urge you to require each region to calculate the cost of State travel to planned discipline workshops during the budget development process and include that amount as a separate budget item. As a concession, states will agree to fund travel expenses to regional discipline workshops held within their respective states. We believe effective planning will ensure training parity between FRA and State inspectors and between State programs.

Thank you for considering this request. Our aim is to ensure that work of State inspectors is not compromised by lack of access to essential regional training events. We appreciate your past support for a regional training policy that is uniform, effective, and moves us closer to our common goal of a safer rail transportation system.

As training is currently in the planning stages and on-going, we look forward to your timely response to this recommendation.

Sincerely,



George Elsmore
Association President
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San Francisco, CA 94102

